

NEW ZEALAND'S DEDICATED VIDEO GAME MONTHLY

ISSUE FOURTY SEVEN

Gamefreaks

PLAYSTATION 2 XBOX PC GAMECUBE PSP NINTENDO DS GAME BOY ADVANCE

OCTOBER 2005

The background of the cover is a dynamic action scene from the video game Battlefield 2. Two soldiers in modern military gear are positioned inside the hull of a tank. The soldier in the foreground is looking towards the viewer, while the one behind him is aiming a machine gun. A large, bright explosion is visible on the left side of the frame, and the tank's barrel points towards the center. The overall atmosphere is intense and war-torn.

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Gamefreaks

PO Box 68-211

Newton

Auckland

Phone: +64 (0) 9 815 1565

Fax: +64 (0) 9 376 0698

Email: jon@tenthplanet.co.nz

staff

Publisher

Jon Minifie

jon@tenthplanet.co.nz

Editor

Nigel Clark

praetor@gamers.net.nz

Design

Scott Judson

Words

Lee Marrett/Nigel Clark

Adrian Hatwell/Stan McGuigan

Advertising

Jon Minifie

jon@tenthplanet.co.nz

(09) 815 1565

Printed by

Vision Through Communication Ltd

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on the cover

EA's award-winning franchise comes to the console bringing the intensity and excitement of battle into the modern era with the most technologically advanced vehicles and weapons. Focusing on the action-packed, multiplayer style that has earned the series such acclaim, gamers will prepare for all-out war. Read about EA's new WWII shooter on page 14.

Noel Leeming

BOND BOND

Harvey Norman
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SHINY BOSS UNVEILS WACHOWSKI MATRIX TRILOGY

Shiny Entertainment's founder Dave Perry was in Auckland recently to promote his upcoming epic, *The Matrix: Path of Neo*



Even at this early stage, *Path of Neo* seems like it could succeed in re-creating the most exciting scenes from the *Matrix* motion pictures. We'll have more updates as we near its simultaneous release for PS2, Xbox and PC

Recently Gamefreaks had the distinct pleasure of meeting Dave Perry who was on a flyby visit to New Zealand. The founder of development studio Shiny, Dave has thought up, and overseen the development of many games which remain beloved to this day. They include the likes of *Earthworm Jim*, *MDK*, *Sacrifice*, *Giants: Citizen Kabuto*, *Wild 9* and *Messiah*. His latest game and the reason for his visit is *The Matrix: Path of Neo*.

We got plenty of hands on time with *The Path of Neo* and came away super impressed. It was obvious that the game was a project Dave had a great deal of feeling for and if he and the folks of Atari are right; and they look to be, then *The Matrix: Path of Neo* will be one of the best games to be released this year. It's not the first time Shiny has tackled the *Matrix*. They created *Enter the Matrix* which tied in and was released alongside the second *Matrix* movie. Commercially it was a massive hit, critically it took a beating by the press and while he doesn't say it outright one can get the feeling that Dave knows and understands this. After all, as he later mentioned, development time was restricted due to the need to get the game out in time for the film, and most importantly players never got the chance the control the hero, Neo.

The Matrix: Path of Neo is different. Two years have gone into the making of this game with a team numbering anywhere from sixty to eighty people. You also get to play as Neo through the events of ALL three films. We're not talking about another hackneyed tie in either, *The Matrix: Path of Neo* has been meticulously recreated; the Wachowski brothers even fleshed out the storyline and added 'what if' scenarios should players take a different path than Neo took in the movies. They've even created an alternate upbeat ending for the many fans who were disappointed by the outcome of *Revolutions*.

Gamefreaks: Still regret turning down the opportunity to create a game for the original *Matrix*?

Dave Perry: I did feel bad about not doing the first one. But I definitely feel happy now. People have asked if I'm going to do another one; and the answer is no. Because I think we're done, I think we really are done. You know we've got everything in here that Neo does so I don't think we need to do another one. I do have ideas of other things that I want to do

Gamefreaks: Are you thinking about going back to some of your older properties, or perhaps coming up with something completely new?

Dave Perry: I would really like to do another *Earthworm Jim* game. The rule of that is I won't do it unless I get the original team. Most of those guys have their own companies now, so it's going to be tough. But from the conversations I've had I believe I can do it. I know that would be very very popular... I just came from Dallas, I presented to 2,200 store managers from the United States, and I showed an *Earthworm 2* shot and they just went crazy.

Gamefreaks: Games are becoming a lot more expensive to make. It seems that will be the end of a lot of the smaller game developers. Do you think this is a good or a bad thing for the industry?

Dave Perry: It's going to be survival of the fittest. It's going to be evolution beyond control, you're going to see so many companies go bankrupt over the next five or so years. But you're going to see some amazing games, have you looked at the video for *Metal Gear Solid 4*? Amazing isn't it, and that's what's so exciting about it all.

JACKSON TO PRODUCE UPCOMING HALO MOVIE

Microsoft's Peter Moore recently announced that Peter Jackson will oversee *Halo*'s transition to the big screen as executive producer

Peter Jackson has sent *Halo* fanboys worldwide into spasms of joy with the news that he and his partner Fran Walsh will be executive producers for the *Halo* movie. The triple academy award winning duo are currently in post production with *King Kong*, where it has been widely reported that Jackson has spent a lot of his spare time battling the *Covenant* in the Xbox game *Halo 2*.

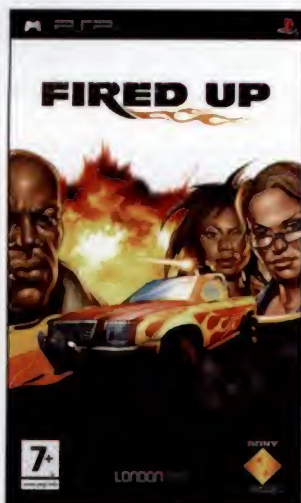
Peter Jackson said "I'm excited to bring *Halo*'s premise, action and settings to the screen with all the specificity and reality today's technology can provide. I'm a huge fan of the game and look forward to helping it come alive on the cinema screen."

There's even more of a Kiwi connection too. Weta, the Wellington based team who were responsible for the special effects and miniatures in *The Lord of the Rings* as well as the upcoming *King Kong* and *Narnia* will be adding their talents to the film. Wellington will also be the host city where filming for the bulk of movie will take place.

Pre-production on *Halo* will start immediately, with shooting due to begin in May 2006. The film is scheduled to be released by Universal Pictures and Twentieth Century Fox studios in mid-2007. Acclaimed UK novelist and screenwriter Alex Garland (*The Beach*, *28 Days Later*) wrote the original feature adaptation, he also confesses to being a big fan of the games. A director is to be announced shortly.



Peter Jackson's horror background will no doubt come in handy for re-creating the *Flood*'s zombie hordes. Jackson and his wife Fran Walsh will be co-producing the film, while Weta Digital and Weta Workshop, which created all the *Lord of the Rings* effects and monsters will be in charge of the film versions of *Halo*'s Elites, Brutes, and Grunts



NEW POTTER TITLE TO COINCIDE WITH MOVIE MANIA

Harry Potter fans pack your bags for Hogwarts. EA are taking us back for more wizardry and adventure next month

Electronic Arts plans to release a new Harry Potter game in November in conjunction with the premiere of the movie "Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire". The "Goblet" game will include competition in the Triwizard Tournament, quidditch matches and other staples of the Potter universe.

The Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire videogame will release in conjunction with the Warner Bros. Pictures film based on J.K. Rowling's fourth book. Experience the thrilling moments of the movie and put your magic to the ultimate test in co-operative play with up to two friends. In the Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire videogame, licensed by Warner Bros. Interactive Entertainment, Harry is mysteriously selected as the fourth contestant in the dangerous Triwizard Tournament. Each competitor in the international competition must confront a fire-breathing dragon, rescue friends from the icy depths of the Black Lake, and navigate the twisting mysteries of a vast, dangerous maze. Players can experience the thrills of the movie -- from the Quidditch World Cup campsite to a heart-stopping duel with Lord Voldemort himself!

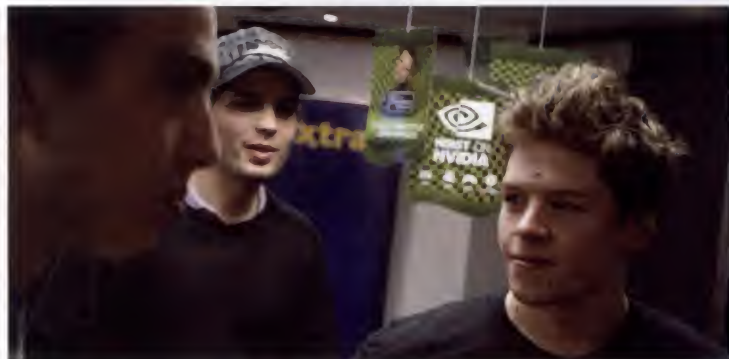
The game will be available for the Xbox, PS2, PSP, Nintendo DS, Game Boy Advance and Windows PCs. Harry Potter has become one of EA's most lucrative franchises, with the latest game racking up \$250 million in sales to become EA's top-grossing title of 2003.



As in past Potter games, you'll get to control the titular hero. Two friends can plug in controllers and play through the campaign cooperatively as Hermione and Ron

E-BLACKS SCORE SWEET SPONSORSHIP DEAL

Head of Xtra Chris Thompson confirms sponsorship deal to send top kiwi gamers to World Cyber Games in Singapore



The match that decided who would be going to Singapore was eventually taken out by ace Counter-Strike team, Parallax (above). Brad Burrowes, Josh Burtenshaw and Byron McLean (top, from the left) in good spirits after their win

A late sponsorship deal has allowed New Zealand to send all its national team to the World Cyber Games Grand Final in Singapore after the collapse of the Australasian WCG rights holders just days before last weekend's National Preliminary Final in Auckland.

Internet service provider Xtra has agreed to become the e-Blacks' naming rights sponsor. The deal ensures New Zealand will be represented at the WCG Grand Final not only in Counter-Strike but in Halo 2 and Warcraft III as well.

Last week an Australian organisation took over the rights to the WCG in New Zealand and Australia, but has to cut New Zealand's grand final contingent down to just one Counter-Strike team on the basis of a lack of available funds.

Martin Caie, director of New Zealand WCG operating partner Cyber Marketing and Events (NZ) Ltd, says the sponsorship from Xtra is of the most genuine kind.

"Xtra has previously expressed interest in supporting the team but the timing has been too early for them. We were looking further ahead but these recent events have been extraordinary to say the least. They've come to the party in more ways than one."

Head of Xtra Chris Thompson said the Internet provider was thrilled to be able to help the full national team get to the World Cyber games.

"These guys are the elite of New Zealand's online gamers, and we want the national team to be at full strength. Aligning ourselves with the e-Blacks is a natural fit for Xtra, especially as we have just launched a new online games channel Xtra Games."

The Xtra e-Blacks fly to Singapore for the World Cyber Games Grand Final from 16-20 November.

The Xtra e-Blacks team selected at last weekend's national finals held at Media Design School are: Counter-Strike clan Parallax - Joshua Burtenshaw, Brendan Tikkanen, Brad Burrowes, Byron McLean and Sam Collinson - Han Hang for Warcraft III and brothers Jason and Craig Bourne for Halo 2.

The winners and other top finishers also won prizes from BenQ, Altec Lansing, VR Concepts and Electronic Arts.

NEWS IN BRIEF

>> A line-up of more than 60 rock, punk, hip-hop and electronic tracks will power players through an expansive Los Angeles skate world in Tony Hawk's American Wasteland. The game will include songs from Green Day, My Chemical Romance, Fall Out Boy, The Bravery, Dead Kennedys, Circle Jerks, Black Flag, among others. In addition, a stand-alone Tony Hawk's American Wasteland Soundtrack from Vagrant Records will later be available and features popular bands Taking Back Sunday, Senses Fail, Thrice, Alkaline Trio and others performing their favourite songs from the bands that influenced their careers and defined the punk music genre including the Misfits, Suicidal Tendencies, Descendents, Bad Brains and The Stooges.

>> Electronic Arts has announced that Academy Award winner Steven Spielberg will be collaborating with the game makers at EA's Los Angeles studio (EALA) to create three new original franchise properties. Beginning this year, with offices located on site at EALA, Spielberg will work directly with EA's development teams to offer his signature style of storytelling to the concept, design, story and artistic visualization of the new games. EA will own the intellectual properties and the game franchises will be developed, published and distributed worldwide by EA. Financial terms of the agreement were not disclosed. "I have been playing EA games for years and have watched them master the interactive format," said Steven Spielberg.

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AGE OF EMPIRES 3

PC / MICROSOFT

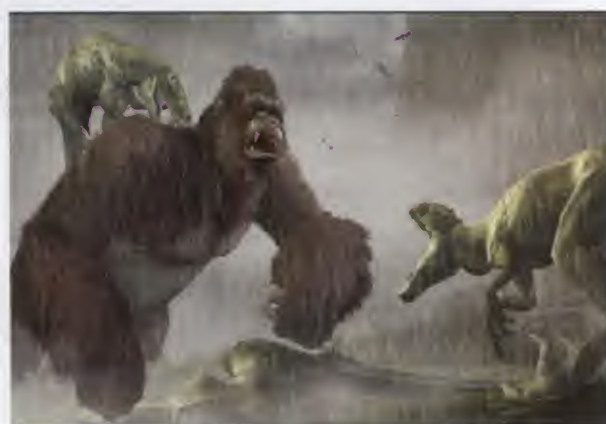
There are not many game franchises of which can be said to have defined a genre. The Age of Empires series is one, each 'generation' a highly addictive title with bottomless depth allowing for hours of replay value.

Following in the chronological order set by previous titles (set in the days of the ancient empires and medieval times) this latest game is set during the colonisation of America, known back in those days as the New World.

The campaign is divided into three main acts (24 missions) which follow ongoing generations of the Black family. There're plenty of rival factions; the English and French are always up for a good scrap, plus you'll also find yourself mixing it up with others such as the Spaniards and the Russians.

The graphics are simply jaw dropping. AOE III uses the Havoc's physics engine which creates some of the most realistic, and awesome battles to be seen on a PC. The only games AOE III can really be compared to looks-wise at the moment are the big system hungry first person shooters.

A new feature is the home city; with sufficient resources player can call on reinforcements and advancing technology.

NEED FOR SPEED
MOST WANTED

PS2, XBOX, PC, PSP, DS / EA GAMES

Most Wanted is the quintessential cops and racers game. That doesn't have as nice a sound as cops and robbers, but get behind the wheel of a Mazda RX8 and you'll forget all about how much fun an arsenal of weapons can be. Hearing someone say, "Multiple vehicles seen headed northbound," with that familiar, overly static voice is the first warning. Once they start describing the situation and refer to you and your opponents as "street racers", you know you're about to attract some serious heat. Cops are a lot meaner, and hunt in greater numbers than in Hot Pursuit and its sequel. Players will be warned of the danger of nearby officers before they begin their pursuit via intercepted police reports.

PETER JACKSON'S KING KONG
THE OFFICIAL GAME OF THE MOVIE

PS2, XBOX, CUBE, PC, PSP / UBISOFT

It's not unexpected to see that there's a game in the works to accompany the release of Peter Jackson's upcoming King Kong movie. What is surprising is that unlike most movie tie-in's, King Kong the game actually looks like it's going to be a really great. Peter Jackson even went out of his way to ensure that the talented game designer Michel Ancel (Beyond Good & Evil) ended up being head developer. One of the unique features of KK is that despite its status as a first person shooter you'll find no health bars or the like. Oh....and yes, you do get to play as Kong!

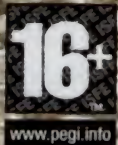
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SSX ON TOUR

PS2, XBOX, PSP / EA BIG

SSX On Tour allows players to create their own boarder or skier and take them from a wannabe to a mountain rockstar. Players can get noticed in all-new shred challenges where they earn an invitation to The Tour where they'll face the best racers in the SSX cast. Fly down the all-new tracks, and master the new monster tricks for both boarding and skiing to make it to the top of The Charts.

"SSX On Tour is a completely fresh take on the SSX franchise," said Steve Barcia, senior producer on the game. "Building on the core speed and trick gameplay that has been so successful in the past, you can now choose your way to become a black diamond rockstar."

Reach breakneck speeds, catch huge air, and become an icon with SSX On Tour. Create a rider or skier and build a career as you progress from a slope-side wannabe to a black-diamond-dominating rockstar. Compete for medals or just tear up the massive new mountain, but make sure you look good doing it because your reputation is always on the line. Pull off jaw-dropping monster tricks to out-style your competitors while hurtling down the slopes at supersonic speeds. You create the hype-the hype creates a legend in SSX On Tour.



STAR WARS BATTLEFRONT 2

PS2, XBOX, PC / EA GAMES

Star Wars Battlefront II improves upon the original game's single-player experience with open-ended, mission-based objectives inspired from all six Star Wars films. The compelling storyline spans more than 16 new locations, many from the Episode III movie, including volcanic Mustafar and the space battle above Coruscant. All-new classic movie moments complete the Star Wars Battlefront II experience, as players battle within the interior of the Death Star and visit Princess Leia's blockade runner, the Tantive IV, as seen at the beginning of Episode IV A New Hope. In addition, at certain key moments within the battles, players can earn the opportunity to wield a lightsaber and use the Force as a Jedi.



TONY HAWK'S AMERICAN WASTELAND

PS2, XBOX, CUBE, PC / ACTIVISION

Tony Hawk's American Wasteland offers a huge open ended world without loading screens which can be skated or biked in without limits. The game is set in Los Angeles and offers more tricks and expanded controls than ever before. There's dozens of shops to be found which offer a crazy level of customization, all the way from buying a new ride, to getting a tattoo.

There's also a back story to be played through with the helpful guidance of Mindy, who along with a few others will provide you with the game's many missions. Multi-



GRAND THEFT AUTO: LIBERTY CITY STORIES

PSP / ROCKSTAR GAMES

Liberty City Stories is a brand new, full Grand Theft Auto game all in the palm of hands on the PSP. It features an all new story, all new features, all new missions, all new characters, all new voices and all new music. The game has been rebuilt from the ground up specifically for the PSP with a brand new game engine built by Rockstar Leeds and Rockstar North, optimizing the texture density, resolution and particle effects. There are amazing reflections on cars, fantastic in-game physics, and an impressive draw distance. Liberty City Stories represents the culmination of 2 years of engineering work have gone into Liberty City Stories and Rockstar Leeds in conjunction with Rockstar North have really pushed the power of the PSP with this title.

Grand Theft Auto: Liberty City Stories takes place 3 years before the events of Grand Theft Auto 3. The game's main character, Toni Cipriani, has returned from laying low for the past 4 years after taking out a rival mob boss for the Leone crime family. Having welcomed him back with open arms, the Don Salvatore Leone is putting Toni to back work under the watchful eye of Vincenzo Cilli, one of his most trusted capo's.

player is also supported including a co-op mode. THAW will be a multiplatform game, but worth noting that it's the first Tony Hawk game to actually use Xbox Live which will make for a special treat for owners of that system.

Applying a 'if it aint broke don't fix it' philosophy, veterans of the previous games will find themselves able to jump right in and get to work mastering the new moves right away. New comers will probably spend a long time simply being amazed at the number of tricks and combos which can be performed.



JAK X: COMBAT RACING

PlayStation 2 / Sony Computer Entertainment

Jak is back in the 3D combat racing game Jak X: Combat Racing. After saving the world in Jak 3, Jak finds out he must save the world once again; this time, by entering a combat racing tournament. As Jak, you must compete in a handful of game modes while progressing through a nonlinear story. The game includes a variety of power-ups, tracks, and customization options. Multiplayer and online modes are also available.



THE MOVIES

PC / Activision

The crisp mind of Peter Molyneux just never ever seems to stop. His latest game is The Movies in which the player becomes the owner of a Hollywood movie studio. Sharing a style similar to the Sims, The Movies progresses from the early days of cinema all the way up to the present day of blockbusters and beyond. Providing near total control over your studio and a good dose of humour, The Movies is definitely one to watch out for next month.



RESIDENT EVIL 4

PlayStation 2 / Capcom

Resident Evil 4 is shaping up nicely on the PlayStation 2. Though the final game may lack some of the fine polish that its GameCube counterpart, there's a more than respectable amount of stuff to be wowed by. Even if you've already played the game on the Cube, the PS2 version still warrants attention because of its impressive visuals, new content, and fantastic gameplay that go a long way toward making this game more than just a port.



SOUL CALIBUR 3

PlayStation 2 / Sony Computer Entertainment

Soul Calibur 3 offers players unprecedented variety in gameplay modes and fighting styles. Gamers can guide the fate of their favorite character in the narrative Tales of Souls Mode, play head-to-head with a friend in Vs. Mode, create their own custom fighters in Character Creation Mode, battle as their custom fighter in a real-time simulation in Chronicles of the Sword Mode, engage in unique and original battles in Soul Arena Mode.



THE WARRIORS

PlayStation 2, Xbox / Rockstar Games

War looms over New York City when "The Warriors" are wrongly accused of killing a big time gang leader and now every gang in the city is out for revenge. "The Warriors" must make their way from one end of New York to their turf on the other side of the city. All that stands between "The Warriors" and their survival are 20 miles and 100,000 gang members. The streets are owned by the armies of the night and there's no turning back.



RATCHET: GLADIATOR

PlayStation 2 / Sony Computer Entertainment

Ratchet and Clank are captured while investigating the disappearance of several famous heroes. The two discover that the missing heroes (including themselves) have been abducted by a deranged media mogul named Glee-man Vox, who intends to use them as contestants on an underground reality combat show. It doesn't take Vox long to realize that Ratchet is the most promising contestant the show has ever seen.



GUN

PS2, Xbox / Activision

Better known for their Tony Hawk games, Neversoft are taking on new ground with the ultra violent GUN. Set in the relatively untouched territory of the American Wild West, you find yourself a recently orphaned desperado in search of his past and the family you never knew. The wide open world and visuals are very promising, giving us hope that GUN can revitalize an unappreciated genre.



CALL OF DUTY 2

PC / Activision

Wowing with its cinematic approach, Call of Duty 2 is set to immerse gamers into the desperation and heroism of World War Two. Pitched battles will be waged all the way from the burning deserts of North Africa, to the icy cold Russian steppes. There's no super human warriors with power ups here, just soldiers doing their best to survive without letting their companions down.



EYETOY PLAY 3

PlayStation 2 / Sony Computer Entertainment

The greatest party series around is back for another bout of intensely entertaining family fun. EyeToy: Play 3 is packed with 12 new games, stunningly inventive PlayRoom experiments, and a vastly enhanced multiplayer mode that now allows 4 players to battle it out simultaneously. Whether you play alone, or with your friends, EyeToy: Play 3 is guaranteed to get you moving.



X-TREME WCG 2005 SHUTTLE PC

Recommended retail: N/A

When you're running a major international gaming tournament how do you keep the competition on a level playing field? The answer is decidedly simple, everybody uses the same computer. Thus we say witness the WCG Shuttle 2005 SB83G5 computer system, THE official computer of the World Cyber Games. Local company Playtech has fifty of these very limited edition beauties to sell (actually we're guessing a lot less than that by now!) with a portion of the money from each sale going towards raising money for the New Zealand WCG program. So if you're in the need for a new computer system, and you want to look super cool at an upcoming LAN here's your beast.

The guts of the WCG Shuttle are as follows. Intel Pentium 4 Processor 640 WithHT Technology (3.2GHz, 2MB L2 Cache, 800MHz FSB); a 1GB Kit of GeIL Ultra Platinum RAM (2 x 512MB) CL2-3-3-6; a Seagate 160GB 7200rpm hard drive; Sparkle Nvidia Geforce 6600GT 128MB GDDR3 PCI-Express graphics card; Integrated 5.1 Channel Sound, LG 16x DVD Dual Layer DVD Rewriter; Integrated 10/100/1000 GB Network and a Floppy Drive.

The front connection ports are hidden nicely behind a flap and include 2 USB2.0, 1xIEEE1394 and plugs for a Mic and Headphone. The rear boasts another 2xUSB2.0, 1xIEEE1394, a Digital SPDIF out x1, COAX digital out x1, audio plugs for a 5.1 speaker, 2x PS/2 and a Serial port.

All of the above is easily accessible. The pearl white Shuttle case is a lot smaller than your usual tower case and a lot better looking. The only downside is that there is limited space available for upgrading this system with the likes of extra hard drives. The DVD drive is neatly and inconspicuously hidden away under a flap. Playtech are also offering various accessories to sell with the computer these include, but are not limited to a Samsung 19" Professional Gaming LCD, 2.1 Altec Lansing Speakers, the Ideazon Z-Board Gaming Keyboard and a Logitech MX-518 Gaming Mouse. www.playtech.co.nz

LOGITECH MX610 LASER CORDLESS MOUSE

Recommended retail: 139.95



The Logitech MX610 Laser Cordless Mouse redefines performance with ultra-precise laser tracking on more surfaces and interference-free 2.4 GHz digital cordless technology. As the world's first smart mouse, it extends battery life by turning on and off with your computer, in sync with your PC, detects and eliminates wireless interference and alerts you when the batteries are low. Easy to configure, email and IM buttons light up when you receive new messages from selected friends and associates. Volume controls add convenience, forward/back buttons allow speed browsing on web sites and documents and the tilt wheel plus zoom is perfect for viewing digital photos and spreadsheets. www.softprint.co.nz

STEELPAD 5H USB GAMING HEADPHONES

Recommended retail: \$199.00

The Steelpad 5H have only recently been released into the marketplace and first impressions are definitely positive. Well designed with a black, silver and grey color scheme these headsets definitely fit into the cool to look at category. There's plenty of features to be enjoyed. The earmuffs are large and sit comfortably over the ears so that even after hours of playing we still didn't get the tension headaches and sore ears that plague many lesser sets. A microphone is inside the left earmuff, easy to pull out and push back in, it's also able to be bent so that it can be positioned perfectly by your mouth. One of the unique features of 5H is that it can be taken apart, for easy, safe transportation and storage.

The cord is extra long and includes a clip with a volume control and a switch to control the headsets sensitivity. There was also a USB attachment included which was where things get really interesting. With the headset comes a small CD containing a virtual 7.1 channel sound card. Once installed you can plug the headset into the computer via a USB port and get the full stereo surround experience. This was something we really appreciated, after all, in one package we had the performance of a high quality sound card mixed with what really sounded like a set of good 7.1 speakers.

The Steelpad 5H provides crystal clear sound even at the highest of volumes and an impressive level of bass. It's well suited for listening to music, but where it comes second to none is when it's used for playing games; hearing an approaching enemy is just as important as seeing him. My Battlefield playing days have definitely changed for the better since using the 5H. For those who like to know the numbers the headphones Freq. response is: 16 - 28,000Hz, Impedance: 32 Ohm, SPL@1kHz, 1Vrms: 110dB

SENNHEISER PC 160 GAMING HEADSET

Recommended retail: \$169.95

If there's one company in the world who are most respected for making headsets it's Sennheiser. For years they've been keeping DJ's, audiophiles and musicians super happy with all manner of headphones complete with high quality sound, and dare we say it, sexy appearances. Gamers are also feeling the love with the release of the PC 160 Gaming Headset which also boasts the blessing of the SK Gaming Network - to the extent that there's a special PC-160SK set complete with logo and blue ear buds on the outside instead of the default carbon silver. The PC-160 has an adjustable headband and nice large ear caps so comfort is assured. Attached to the left ear cap is a bendable microphone, which when not in use can be folded upright and out of the way. The microphone also features noise canceling technology which means the people you're talking to can hear your voice with crystal clear clarity without the unpleasantness of heavy breathing or background chatter. The cord is a nice ten meters in length which means it can reach the back of your computer with ease; it also conveniently comes out of the left ear cap which kept our right hands free of any entangling cords. A control pod made for easy volume changes and a quick way to mute the microphone.



The sound dispersion was excellent and does a great job of creating a surround sound like experience which is becoming ever more vital in many competitive games. With a frequency response of 15 - 15,000 Hz the sound quality is superb and free of the crackles and pops which plague many lesser headphones. Our one concern with the otherwise excellent PC-160 was that it seemed to lack true depth in its bass. With that in mind however you certainly get more than what you pay for and the PC-160 strikes a nice balance cost-wise for those who want to stay well clear of a cheap and nasty headset, while avoiding the kick in the guts cost of most high range products. Syntec.co.nz contains more information about the PC-160 and other Sennheiser products.



ATI RADEON X800 PRO

Recommended retail: N/A

The Radeon X800 pro graphics technology set a new standard in graphics performance and visual realism. With up to 16 pipelines, higher clock speeds and breakthrough image enhancement technology, Radeon X800 Graphics Technology introduced a whole new gaming category called High-Definition Gaming.

The Radeon X800 Graphics Technology delivers whopping frame rates and up to two times the performance of the acclaimed Radeon 9800 PRO. Radeon X800 graphics technology provides an extremely smooth, responsive HD gaming experience, putting capable gamers in complete control of even the most demanding game titles. A new architecture based on the latest .13 micron, low-k manufacturing process with ultra fast and efficient GDDR3 memory combine to produce extreme data rates and unbelievable acceleration in a quiet, cool, single-slot solution.

The card wows, being capable of over 140 billion floating point operations per second (Giga FLOPS). It features an advanced pixel shader engine and 12 parallel pixel pipelines which can do an incredible 6 gigapixels/second fill rate in full precision and six programmable vertex shader pipelines capable of over 700 millions vertices per second.



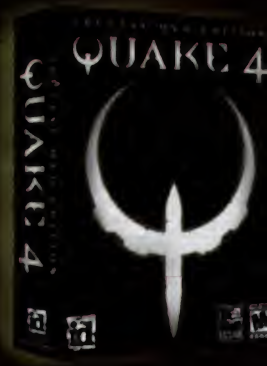
**PREPARE FOR THE
ULTIMATE WAR...**

QUAKE 4

In a war for Earth's survival, against an unrelenting enemy - the only way to defeat them, is to become one of them.

- ☐ Battle outdoors using tanks and walkers
- ☐ Fight with the support of an elite squad
- ☐ Annihilate the alien enemy with an arsenal of hi-tech weaponry
- ☐ Compete online in fast action, arena-style multiplayer

**...THE INVASION BEGINS
OCTOBER 2005**



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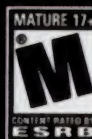


Published By

ACTIVISION

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WWW.QUAKE4GAME.COM



Blood and Gore
Intense Violence
Strong Language

BATTLEFIELD 2: MODERN COMBAT



There's a selection of around 70 weapons to cock, lock and drop. That's a lot of pain to dispatch, and the usual suspects in the shape of assault rifles, rockets, shotguns and sniper rifles are joined with high tech, like heat-seeking missiles and laser designated bombs to keep things interesting



PLATFORM: PS2, XBOX
 GENRE: WW2 ACTION SHOOTER
 PUBLISHER: EA GAMES
 DEVELOPER: DIGITAL ILLUSIONS
 RATING: 16+
 PLAYERS: 1-24 PLAYERS/ONLINE
 WEBSITE: WWW.EA.CO.NZ
 RECOMMENDED RETAIL PRICE: \$69.95
 RELEASE DATE: NOVEMBER 24

It's been a long time waiting, but console gamers at last can experience the Battlefield franchise in all of its multiplayer glory. Previously restricted to the domain of PC gamers with their high-speed internet connections and LAN parties, Battlefield Modern Combat is a much more accessible game, whilst still retaining its fun factor. To date the games have taken players to the frontlines of World War Two, the jungles of Vietnam and most recently into a fictional three way conflict between the US, China and a Middle Eastern Coalition.

Battlefield Modern Combat sticks to the near future setting of the latter game, but ups the ante by having a total of four 'factions' to battle with. Once again the US takes centre stage, alongside the Chinese, Middle Eastern Coalition and new-comers the European Union. The setting for this war is poor little Kazakhstan, a country we've seen destroyed in a fair few other video games over the years! The most striking difference with this version of Battlefield is the single player game...being that it actually has one. Yup, you heard that right, a bona fide single player campaign with a plot, multiple mission objectives and a sense of progression. Not, we have to stress, the gets-old-real-fast running about killing bots that we've had to play through in order to get some 'practice' with other Battlefield titles.

An intriguing new feature of this single player mode is the hotswapping. With a single press of a button we found we could make giant leaps across the map and possess (for lack of a better word) the body of an allied soldier. So should you find yourself unwilling to foot it into the enemy base, hotswap into a jeep. See an enemy helicopter starting to take off? Hotswap into a nearby tank and blow it to kingdom come. And should you come under fire from a foot well positioned soldier





with anti-tank rockets, you can (hopefully) hotswap into an equally well positioned sniper and have that soldier meet the business end of a high caliber bullet.

To crank up the variety factor, each of the armies offers a number of different troop types. These range from the obvious such as special ops, snipers and combat engineers, to more support orientated roles such as medics. And hey, this wouldn't be a true Battlefield game if there weren't vehicles. More than thirty land, sea and air vehicles are on offer. Helicopters, tanks, amphibious craft, troop carriers, fast moving 4x4's and more. Most of these naturally have some sort of weapon, from the meanest of machine guns, up to rockets and cannons. Those who aren't familiar with Battlefield games should also be aware that vehicles can carry team-mates as passengers, either to be transported to where the fighting is, or manning the weapons so everybody can fight...and possibly die together.

Both the PlayStation 2 and Xbox versions of Battlefield Modern Combat support online multiplayer games with up to twenty four participants. There's support for clans, VOIP and deep stat-tracking so you can have a good idea of how you stack up against the rest of the world, or perhaps friends closer to home. Just like the PC version the game features two teams having at each other for control of strategic flagged map points; the side which controls the map point can use it as a spawn point for their troops. During our time with Battlefield Modern Combat we were both surprised, and pleased at how large and varied the maps were. We saw hard fought close quarter urban fights and massive open battles with plenty of vehicles on both sides. In all thirteen maps are on offer, although we wouldn't be surprised to see more made available through downloadable content at a later date.

Graphically the game has shaped up very well. The battles were joyfully confusing with explosions going off all around, bullets pinging, bodies falling, buildings destroyed and dust or snow storms being whipped up by low flying helicopters. The models for the soldiers and vehicles looked great and there was no slow down to be seen even during the most carnage filled firefights. The Xbox version has a few improvements over the PS2 such as better loading times, more textures and so on. But even Playstation owners can content themselves knowing that Battlefield is one great looking game. Audio also did a great job of impressing with its thoroughly realistic and thundering sound effects.

There was a time where the idea of a Battlefield game being on a console would be something to scoff at. No more. We're not wanting to make ourselves the target in the ever growing PC versus console shooting gallery, so sorry, no grand statements on which is best. But this game has gone a long way in proving that multiplayer first person shooters can make it without the keyboard/mouse combination. Already a highly polished and super fun game, we're of the opinion that Battlefield Modern Combat will be one of the most popular online shooters on either console. Huya.



Armed with the latest modern weaponry, players can then take control of any of the 30+ vehicles in game to engage in major conflicts with up to 24 players simultaneously, online, with voiceover communication - even on the PlayStation 2 version





Earth is under siege by an alien race. The Stroggs are cybernetic warriors consumed in a systematic annihilation of other species and civilizations. In a desperate attempt to survive an attack on Earth, an armada of Earth's finest warriors is sent to take the battle to the Strogg home planet

QUAKE 4



PLATFORM: PC
 GENRE: FIRST PERSON SHOOTER
 PUBLISHER: ACTIVISION
 DEVELOPER: ID SOFTWARE
 RATING: 16+
 PLAYERS: 1-16 PLAYERS/ONLINE
 WEBSITE: WWW.SOFTPRINT.CO.NZ
 RECOMMENDED RETAIL PRICE: \$69.95
 RELEASE DATE: OCTOBER 21

Hands up who learned all they know about First Person Shooters playing Quake? OK fair enough there were others before it, but really there aren't many other titles that could claim ownership over so many aspects of the genre as we know it today. Well hold on to your hats because id Software's Quake 4 is about to be released and we here at Gamefreaks reckon it's going to be a beauty.

If you felt cheated by Quake III: Arena when you realised you weren't going to get to continue playing the single player story that you played the crap out of in Quake II, fear not because finally we see a nod to those of us who hold story-based gaming dear; if you were all about the intensely quick reflexes required to get ahead in Q3: Arena then the multiplayer action in Quake 4 will have you quivering with barely concealed excitement.

Picking up right where the action finished up after Quake II, you play one of the marine invasion force coming to clean up the leftovers on Stroggos, the home planet of a race of cyborgs who had some issue with us humans. Right before you get to the planet you're shot down and find yourself stranded and alone on an alien world. While fighting to get back to your mates you discover things aren't going as well as could be expected. This is vintage Quake action and we love it.

You'll quickly feel at home too, as the levels are very similar in look to those of Quake II; rusted corridors meet concrete ruins meet wide-open outdoor spaces and tight corridors. In a new twist, vehicles now feature prominently; we've seen a sort of two-legged mecha with a cannon and a rocket launcher and heard tell of a hovortank as well.

Quite frankly sometimes driving vehicles in a First Person Shooter can wear a bit thin but if we get to drive a mech around we're going to be happy.

Multiplayer action plays very much like earlier Quakes, especially Q3: Arena, but that's totally cool because it's just so damn good they obviously didn't see any need to make it different. They've even remade some of the old levels making Quake 4 multiplayer a sort of cool old-school nu-school cyborg. All players start with a machine gun rather than the pistol in multiplayer and this time they've made it very much a weapon you can just run with; there's no need to make straight for a better weapon spawn point because you can do some serious damage right off the bat.

Most of the weapons are just revamped versions of those found in previous Quake titles so if you played any of those you'll be up and fragging in no time at all, and you will be pleased to hear that the Gauntlet is back in Quake 4; but don't be the guy who constantly gets taken out by a madman wearing a big metal glove.

Quake 4 will be released very soon; it'll be available on both the PC and will also be one of the first titles released on the Xbox 360, and if you're at all like us you'll be wanting both versions because the way things are shaping up Quake 4 looks like it's going to be a heck of a lot of fun.

GENJI: DAWN OF THE SAMURAI



PLATFORM: PLAYSTATION 2
 GENRE: ACTION/ADVENTURE
 PUBLISHER: SCEI
 DEVELOPER: GAME REPUBLIC
 RATING: 15+
 PLAYERS: 1 PLAYER
 WEBSITE: WWW.PLAYSTATION.CO.NZ
 RECOMMENDED RETAIL PRICE: \$99.95
 RELEASE DATE: OCTOBER 25

Newbie developers Game Republic bring Genji to life in 13th Century Japan with a rather intriguing story involving magical stones, the possession of which makes you, in a nutshell, kick-ass super strong and powerful to boot. Of course the fertile land is ravaged by war and terror thanks to a mean gang of thugs who've hogged heaps of the stones and are on a mission to find them all so they can be totally unbeatable.

You play a warrior named Yoshitsune who just happens to have one of the remaining stones and it's your job to stop those thugs from really taking complete control. On your way prepare to meet plenty of opposition from both countless minions and powerful bosses alike; once in a while you gain another stone to add to your collection and hence your powers increase as the game progresses.

You also encounter a huge monk called Benkei, who you join forces with.

Each character has different traits; Benkei has huge hulking strength and Yoshitsune is fast and agile and you can take



Taking its visual cue from movies like "Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon" and "House of Flying Daggers", Genji has a beautifully crafted aesthetic



A unique artificial intelligence, developed in conjunction with top Japanese fight director, Mitsuhiro Seike, constantly controls the action transforming each battle sequence into carefully choreographed kung-fu combat

advantage of this by switching between characters as you go. You need to move a rock to get into a cave for example, switch to Benkei, he knows where it's at.

Combat is where you spend the bulk of your time. Square is your basic strike, Triangle is the more powerful but slow strike and of course you can form combos for Africa. Weapons also play a part and when everything heats up the action is fast and fun. Being Feudal Japan, the sword is quite important and thus there's loads of slashing and slicing of bodies. Benkei can literally break someone in half which is fun.

Naturally the stones you possess also feature in combat and these guys really make things interesting: they charge as you fight and once they are fully charged hit L1, which slows down time to let you deal to everyone you're fighting at the time. Well-timed button pressing matters here; as your enemies attack, hitting Square at the right point lets you dodge their attack and launch a ferocious counter which, more often than not, will kill them in a single hit. Bosses are more tricky, but that's all part of the fun right?

Of course all your stats increase as you play, but make sure to use both characters equally or one will benefit more than the other. Weapons and armour can also be upgraded, as well as made by a blacksmith when you find the appropriate parts.

Genji is a well made title for a new developer and is intensely fun with an intriguing story. Unfortunately it doesn't go on long enough, clocking in at around the eight hour mark, but replay value is good as you unlock various items and difficulty settings, and you can also play a mode which lets you play right through from the beginning but keep your stuff from the last game; a nice touch. The game is beautiful to look at; the environments have been artfully crafted and the characters beautifully made. The soundtrack is awesome but take note: the dialogue is in Japanese with English subtitles which in our opinion adds to the authentic feel of the game but could just as easily annoy. But that's just being picky; Genji: Dawn of the Samurai is definitely worth a look.

THAT'S MY TEAM!



PlayStation 2


PC
CD-ROM



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BROTHERS IN ARMS: EARNED IN BLOOD

	PLATFORM: PS2, XBOX, PC
	GENRE: ACTION/SHOOTER
	PUBLISHER: UBISOFT
	DEVELOPER: GEARBOX
	RATING: 16+
	PLAYERS: 1-4 PLAYERS
	WEBSITE: WWW.UBI.COM
RECOMMENDED RETAIL PRICE: \$99.95	
RELEASE DATE: OCTOBER 28	

We've definitely been spoiled for choice when it comes to World War 2 First Person Shooters. There's EA's long running Medal of Honour series and Activision's Call of Duty, plus Battlefield 1942 and countless other balls out rush 'em and crush 'em titles. When Brothers in Arms was released not even a year ago it was refreshing to see a new twist on the genre; with squad-based tactics and maneuvers being skillfully blended with the intense nature of the WW2 conflict Brothers in Arms was quickly hailed as a new classic.

Which is why we were so happy when, merely months after the game first graced our consoles, Brothers in Arms: Earned in Blood will give us a new campaign with many more missions for us to get our teeth into. While we won't be seeing any huge leaps and bounds graphically speaking, nor will we see anything spectacularly new in terms of gameplay, the game will nonetheless offer up much more of what made the first title so engaging, and for that you gotta love it.

This time you're in charge of Sergeant Joe Hartsock leading a team of men through more of Europe's toughest battlefields. However, while Brothers in Arms: Road to Hill 30 introduced us to indoor settings, house-to-house combat will be very much the focus in Earned in Blood.

You'll be moving slowly from room to room, blasting corridors and holding staircases and using your men to clear kitchens and bedrooms of the evil Hun. You'll find sound plays a big part here. Make too much noise blasting your way through the alley on your way to the next block of houses and you'll have so many Nazis on your tail you won't know where to throw your grenades; similarly if you're quiet enough you can hear which rooms are occupied and how much trouble you're going to have when you finally pluck up enough courage to blast your way inside. Even an accurately throw, seemingly well timed grenade can be both a blessing and a curse in this type of close quarters battle.

One thing you will notice a significant difference in is the intelligence of the enemy squads. In Road to Hill 30 you were often able to trick the Germans into staying put, there's no tricking to be had here; stay in one place for long and these guys will outflank you sooner than you can say "need a medic up here now, goddammit!". Nowhere will you have experienced such well oiled teamwork in a non-multiplayer situation. According to developers Gearbox, in Road to Hill 30 they eased back on the AI since gamers were unfamiliar with the new style of gameplay. Now in Earned in Blood they've obviously decided we've grown a big enough pair to allow us to have a real turn and done away with the AI restrictions.

If you've been looking for something different in a First Person Shooter then we recommend you take a look at the Brothers in Arms series. The highly enjoyable mix of strategic planning and fast-paced twitch-style FPS action will show you just how much you were yearning for a challenge, and Earned in Blood builds on already solid foundations paving the way for what is fast becoming a genre of its own.



Not content with turning up the difficulty, developer Gearbox has also made the game appreciably longer and focused more on urban combat. Both changes address shortcomings of Road to Hill 30, and both should please fans of the series



Earned in Blood, like its predecessor, doesn't feel the need to splatter bright colours and special effects all over Northern France. It's not a flashy game, but it is a smooth and realistic one. Making do just fine with a muted, almost muddy palette, they lack the varnished look that many modern 3D games have, and the game is much more convincing for it

X-MEN LEGENDS II: RISE OF THE APOCALYPSE



PLATFORM: PS2, XBOX, PC, CUBE, PSP
GENRE: ACTION/ADVENTURE
PUBLISHER: ACTIVISION
DEVELOPER: MARVEL
RATING: 12+
PLAYERS: 1-4 PLAYERS
WEBSITE: WWW.SOFTPRINT.CO.NZ
RECOMMENDED RETAIL PRICE: \$79.95
RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

With the first X-Men: Legends title Raven took the convoluted X-mythology and turned out the best videogame adaptation Xavier's gang of mutants had yet seen. Taking another swing at the series with Rise of Apocalypse we can delve even deeper into Marvel's sizable mutant toy box to forge an uneasy alliance between the X-Men and Magneto's Brotherhood of Evil Mutants All to stave off an even greater mutual threat.



X-Men Legends II: Rise of Apocalypse delivers a bigger, deeper and more epic action/RPG experience

X-Men: Legends 2 makes few changes to an already well-rounded gameplay system, preferring deeper and more interesting story developments over technical tweaks in order to advance the series. As before you lead a group of four characters, switching your control between them on the fly, in order to punch, slash, zap, and maraud your way through waves of baddies in your fight against the ancient evil of Apocalypse.

The game's main hook is the merging of both the good and bad teams from the previous game; it's always more fun being bad but it's especially enjoyable to have the boy scouts have to rely on the lesser of two evils to watch their backs.

Fans of the comic books (and other various adaptations) will get a kick out of seeing faces from all over the vast Marvel universe pop up during the game; there is, of course, the playable core team of X-Men and Brotherhood mainstays along with a cast of obscure bit-players making cameos throughout.

Overall this sequel raises the bar for an already excellent series; while not undergoing any significant overhaul, an engrossing new story and expanded universe ensure that even those who played the first title into the ground will definitely be back for seconds.



Gameplay enhancements include more than double the superpowers and customisation capabilities, the debut of several new characters, over 100 diverse types of enemies, and a breathtaking range of exotic and real-world environments

ULTIMATE SPIDER-MAN

The superhero videogame renaissance continues with Treyarch's third run at Spidey, this time in his 'Ultimate' comic form. Building on a solid, though unexceptional, foundation Ultimate Spider-Man ups the web-slinging ante but is still haunted by pangs of unfulfilled potential; a minor step in the right direction for our friendly neighbourhood spider-man.



PLATFORM: PS2, XBOX, PC, DS, CUBE, GBA
GENRE: ACTION/ADVENTURE
PUBLISHER: ACTIVISION
DEVELOPER: MARVEL
RATING: 12+
PLAYERS: 1 PLAYER
WEBSITE: WWW.SOFTPRINT.CO.NZ
RECOMMENDED RETAIL PRICE: \$79.95
RELEASE DATE: OCTOBER 21

The creators have spared no pains to thoroughly recreate the vibrant world of the comic books, roping comic scribe Brian Bendis to pen the game's story and developing an outstanding cel-shaded style that fits the book's dynamic tone perfectly. In fact if nothing else the game is worth a play for the visual style alone. Unfortunately the exceptional presentation is let down by gameplay mistakes repeated from the previous Spider-Man games. Web slinging is still a core feature of the title, and although simplified and slowed down a tad this time it's still all kinds of fun. The problems arise in the game's lack of story related missions and over-reliance on tedious, arbitrary 'city goals' that involve beating on random thugs or racing about the town. They don't advance the plot and just aren't any fun after a while.

As a cool twist to the story, as well as Spider-Man you'll also get to control the drooling monster Venom, a fan favourite villain with an insatiable hunger to feed off the living. As Spider-Man you'll be saving civilians, as Venom you'll be eating them; it's a wonderfully perversedynamic that does its best to keep the gameplay varied and interesting.

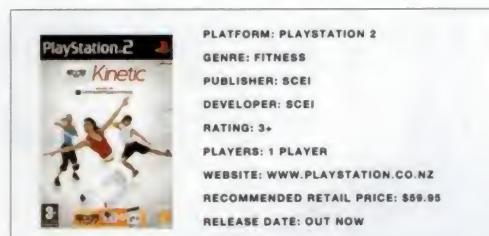


The intricate character designs and game environments look as though they've been ripped straight from the panels of the comic itself

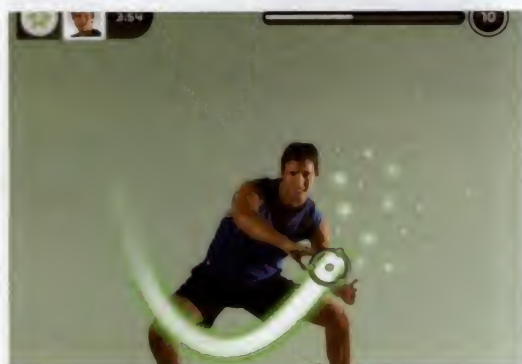


Although a little on the short side, Activision's Ultimate Spider-Man is an admirable take on the wall crawler and hopefully signals even greater things to come from this series in the future

EYETOY: KINETIC



PLATFORM: PLAYSTATION 2
 GENRE: FITNESS
 PUBLISHER: SCEI
 DEVELOPER: SCEI
 RATING: 3+
 PLAYERS: 1 PLAYER
 WEBSITE: WWW.PLAYSTATION.CO.NZ
 RECOMMENDED RETAIL PRICE: \$59.95
 RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW



Obviously up for a challenge, Sony has decided to bring together two seemingly irreconcilable lifestyles: the slovenly world of the gaming enthusiast and that most repugnant realm of fitness training. The latest title for the PS2's wonderful little EyeToy aims to get the blood flowing, heart pumping, and the average gamer wheezing as you jump through the hoops of a fully programmable, on-screen fitness program.

Bundled with a new "full vision" lens attachment for the EyeToy, Kinetic maps your body onto the screen and into a variety of training exercises; get the sweat flowing with a hyper cardio workout, work your guns in the combat drills, sculpt away the years of couch-bound inactivity with toning exercises, and gain complete mastery of your body via yoga and meditation in the mind & body area. Designed for "all fitness levels" EyeToy: Kinetic will ease the inert into motion and test the limits of the dedicated fitness freaks.

To ensure the game doesn't end up gathering dust in your closet like those other 'get fit quick' gizmos the infomercials suckered you into, EyeToy: Kinetic supplies you with your very own personal trainer to keep you on track. The virtual fitness gurus will guide you through your workouts, chiding you for slacking and encouraging you as the calories fall away. You can even program an extensive workout schedule over a couple of months, miss a date and you better believe those personal trainers are going to get in your face about it.

It's nice to see ongoing support for the non-traditional gaming experiments and the EyeToy is certainly one of the most successful of the current generation. It never hurts to get a little exercise (well, it hurts a lot sometimes) and even the completely fitness-phobic will get a kick out of EyeToy: Kinetic's unique take on staying in shape.



Those with an interest in health will love this, but will gamers get off the couch for Kinetic? The answer, we believe, is a resounding... maybe. Some of us sure need the exercise -- but there are so many games to play...

FIFA 06



PLATFORM: PS2, XBOX, PC, PSP, DS, CUBE
 GENRE: SPORTS
 PUBLISHER: EA SPORTS
 DEVELOPER: EA SPORTS
 RATING: 3+
 PLAYERS: 1-8 PLAYERS
 WEBSITE: WWW.EA.CO.NZ
 RECOMMENDED RETAIL PRICE: \$79.95
 RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

EA's FIFA 06 is packed with all the goodies that you come to expect, and a few extra titbits to explore.

With an even more compelling and complete Manager Mode you can sign sponsors, scout for transfers and buy players to build your team to dominate the leagues from around the world over a massive 15 year career. On top of that you will need to control the club budget, manage the coaching staff and players as well as decide the tactical formations for each game.

FIFA 06 offers full-on attacking intuitive gameplay where team momentum can suddenly shift during the game: if you miss shots at goal, morale will drop, sapping the energy and enthusiasm from your team.

The graphics are top notch with recognisable players, clubs, kits and detailed stadiums packed with chanting soccer mad fans. The commentary is smooth with plenty of phrasing to build up the realism of the game.

Boasting 10,000 world class players, 21 leagues and the latest 05/06 statistics FIFA 06 is oozing so much that you'll never need to buy another soccer title; that is of course until the release of FIFA 07. On top of that you can play offline with up to 8 friends in the FIFA Lounge or go Online against up to 2 other players.



By correctly using tactical play you can control and shift the impetus of the game to your favour. As always FIFA provides plenty of customisation options, with authentic and up to date player profiles that are sure to keep any soccer fan happy while they take control of their favourite international teams

KINGDOM UNDER FIRE: THE CRUSADERS



PLATFORM: XBOX
 GENRE: ACTION/ADVENTURE
 PUBLISHER: DEEP SILVER
 DEVELOPER: PHANTAGRAPH
 RATING: 12+
 PLAYERS: 1-4 PLAYERS/ONLINE
 WEBSITE: N/A
 RECOMMENDED RETAIL PRICE: \$99.95
 RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

A land in turmoil, Elves, Humans, Orcs, Dark Elves and Vampires are all struggling for control of the continent of Bersia.

Kingdom Under Fire: Heroes is the sequel to last year's Kingdom Under Fire: Crusaders and features the same mix of action and real time strategy that made it one of the more unique Xbox titles.

Similar in some ways to the long running Dynasty Warriors series, KUF pits the player on battlefields filled with dozens, sometimes even hundreds of soldiers, monsters and artillery pieces. The difference is that you also get to control squadrons of fighters, directing their movements, formations and use of special attacks and spells. We were suitably impressed by the number of occasions we found ourselves embroiled in a melee involving up to two hundred men and creatures, with spells exploding and flying creatures such as Wyverns dropping poison all about.

The game features six playable heroes from both the 'goodly' nations and the Dark Legion. Each of these heroes has their own campaign, with storylines intertwining with one another. The story is your standard fantasy affair and entertaining enough, although it suffered a little from poor translation -the developers are Korean and grammatical errors are a little too common. Newcomers may be a little overwhelmed at first, being that there's no real tutorial, a good incentive perhaps to give the previous game in the series a go too.

Kingdom Under Fire: Heroes also supports Xbox Live with an option for downloadable content, and multiplayer battles where up to six players and their troops can battle each other or against waves of AI controlled enemies.



Strategy fans looking for a long-lasting console experience with frequent bouts of hack and slash should check this out



Crusaders employs many standard RPG elements, which are primarily managed at your base camp. You will earn cash from battles, which you can spend on weapon and armour upgrades, or mercenaries



MADDEN NFL 06

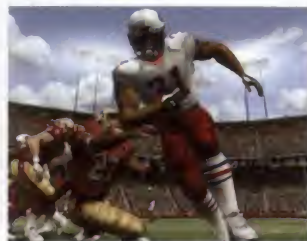
EA's massively successful Madden franchise has been steadily schooling kiwis on all things NFL for over 15 years and with a growing fan base outside the US it seems more and more are learning to appreciate the spectacle of NFL football. Madden 06 was one of the recent EA Sports titles to stir our curiosity.

One of the first features you notice about the latest Madden is the game's flawless user interface: Madden probably has the best overall presentation of any sports title, certainly from the ones we've seen lately. On the whole the game's visuals are fantastic, from the eerily accurate player likenesses to the improved weather effects. The audio is again first-class with stadiums of roaring fans that always brings the games to life along with a smooth, rolling commentary that never seems to miss a beat.

For those of you that have played Madden before the big new feature offered this year is the Quarterback or QB vision; a zone of light (representing your field of vision) shows exactly what your Quarterback sees. Players can quickly sum up the options and throw more accurate passes while absorbing the pressure of controlling a game. Added to that is the Precision Passing which allows the QB to find a receiver with pinpoint accuracy. Another standout game feature is Superstar Mode which takes you through a 20 year career of an NFL pro from his first draft as a rookie through to Superbowl fame and glory, and eventual retirement.

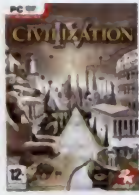


PLATFORM: PS2, XBOX, PC, PSP, DS
 GENRE: SPORTS
 PUBLISHER: EA SPORTS
 DEVELOPER: EA SPORTS
 RATING: 3+
 PLAYERS: 1-8 PLAYERS
 WEBSITE: WWW.EA.CO.NZ
 RECOMMENDED RETAIL PRICE: \$79.95
 RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW



Create your own Superstar and guide his life on and off the field. Choose an agent and live the NFL superstar life

SID MEIER'S CIVILIZATION IV



PLATFORM: PC
 GENRE: STRATEGY
 PUBLISHER: TAKE 2 INTERACTIVE
 DEVELOPER: FIRAXIS
 RATING: 12+
 PLAYERS: 1 PLAYER
 WEBSITE: N/A
 RECOMMENDED RETAIL PRICE: \$99.95
 RELEASE DATE: NOVEMBER 3

When it comes to strategy games on the PC, one name rules supreme: Civilization. The fourth in this hugely successful series boasts an all new 3D engine and gameplay changes which aim to make for faster, more fun filled gaming sessions.

For those who are so far unfamiliar with Sid Meier's Civilization the premise is that you start the game with little more than a stone age settler and a few basic technologies. Cities will then need to

be founded, improvements and wonders built and the landscape changed via the likes of roads, irrigation, mines and windmills to cater for ever growing populations. Over time new technologies will be researched allowing of the creation of new buildings, and military units. The game caters to all of human history, from the time we first started to build little mud huts, all the way up into the near future with massive metropolises high tech tanks and nuclear missiles.

New features of the game include an increased focus on the importance of religion with all civilizations eventually discovering the likes of Catholicism, Taoism and Buddhism. While the different faiths don't have any particular advantage over each other, civilizations with the some beliefs have a much easier time getting along with each other.

War should get more interesting too with the old system of simple regular to veteran to elite upgrades being changed. Now the player can select from a number of 'abilities' such as extra defense while fighting on plains, or an increased strength when fighting against a particular enemy unit. Most will be happy to know too that multiplayer is much more user friendly. Civilization IV also comes with a powerful modding engine so fans can create their own unique games.



An easy-to-use interface will be immediately familiar to RTS and action game players, and newcomers to the series



Civilization IV will come to life like never before in a beautifully detailed, living 3D world that will elevate the gameplay experience to a whole new level

SPARTAN: TOTAL WARRIOR

Changing gears from their acclaimed Real Time Strategy formula Creative Assembly, the minds behind the Total War series, are now trying their hand at the action genre. Spartan: Total Warrior has you assume control of a lone Spartan warrior as he slashes his way through the invading Roman army to defend king and country from devastation. Riding the breakout success of God of War, the ancient world, replete with mythical creatures and callous gods, serves as a familiar backdrop.

First impressions suggest the game has spared little to deliver on the promise of massively proportioned battles, with the manic combat field teeming with goons on either side.

Your Spartan hero comes complete with the expected melee attacks, a bow and arrow for ranged assault, and some divinely powered heavy attacks to decimate the tougher enemies. While slicing your way through the crowd you'll have to achieve certain goals to achieve victory, like knocking out enemy centurions or destroying enemy towers. Some creatively choreographed events throughout the battles might make good on the 'interactive blockbuster' feel the game is striving for but the game's early showings didn't have much more than the odd catapult assault to immerse the player.

Hopefully the completed product will pull out a few more stops beyond what was on show in the demo, if not then we're in for another run of the mill, albeit well presented, hack and slash outing from a creative team we've come to expect a lot more of.



PLATFORM: PS2, XBOX, GUBE
 GENRE: ACTION/ADVENTURE
 PUBLISHER: SEGA
 DEVELOPER: CREATIVE ASSEMBLY
 RATING: 12+
 PLAYERS: 1 PLAYER
 WEBSITE: N/A
 RECOMMENDED RETAIL PRICE: \$99.95
 RELEASE DATE: OCTOBER 21



It's no great surprise that the empire fell if this is how the top brass ran their armies back then; a football field of ancient warriors certainly adds to the game's dynamic chaos, but full regiments of lobotomised AI at times reduce the gameplay to a standard swords 'n' sandals brawl



Brutal combat meets epic warfare on the battlefields of the ancient world as you fight for your life, your freedom and your honour



Mystic Pink & Cosmic Blue

NINTENDO DS™

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TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 06

PLATFORM: PSP
 GENRE: SPORTS
 PUBLISHER: EA SPORTS
 DEVELOPER: EA SPORTS
 RATING: 3+
 PLAYERS: 1-4 PLAYERS
 WEBSITE: WWW.EA.CO.NZ
 RECOMMENDED RETAIL PRICE: \$79.95
 RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW



Our personal favourite of the EA Sports releases for Sony's new PlayStation Portable is definitely Tiger Woods PGA Tour 06. Using advanced Game face technology you can create and customise your own player to battle through the courses with Tiger Woods and numerous other golfing legends who will challenge you every step of the way.

Beginning with amateur status you will need to earn some respectability and income by taking on single opponents or attending the tournaments. Not only will you come away with a little fame but solid results can attract valuable sponsor-

ship deals. With the income you generate you can increase your personal skills or purchase the latest golfing equipment and attire (over 1000 licensed customisable clothes, items and clubs). As your fame and fortune grows, so too will the challenges ahead as your status changes to professional and eventually Legend you will soon look the part and play as a seasoned professional campaigner.

In addition to using the left analogue stick for your swing you can use the right shoulder button to boost your shot and spin the ball. You can also choose what type of shot you wish to play (pitch, flop, chip and punch).

With its obvious portability this PSP installment offers great versatility for fans of the Tiger Woods franchise can now hit the greens anytime anyplace. Add to that the beautifully detailed courses, wireless multiplayer mode, excellent commentary and background sounds and you've got a must have for any Golfing enthusiast. You'll need a little patience with the loading times but other than that Tiger Woods PGA Tour 06 is a good, solid buy.



ADVANCE WARS DUAL STRIKE

PLATFORM: NINTENDO DS
 GENRE: WARFARE/STRATEGY
 PUBLISHER: NINTENDO
 DEVELOPER: NINTENDO
 RATING: 3+
 PLAYERS: 1-2 PLAYERS
 WEBSITE: WWW.NINTENDO.COM
 RECOMMENDED RETAIL PRICE: \$79.95
 RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

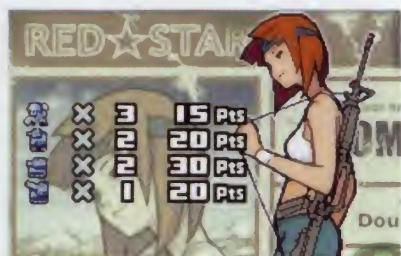


visuals is a viciously complex strategy game that can and will absorb every moment of your free time.

Dual Strike introduces more of everything you couldn't help but love about the previous games and piles a whole host of extras on top. Campaign mode throws you up against the biggest threat the insidious Black Hole Army has ever presented, you'll need the help of many familiar faces and a good deal of newbies to claim victory this day. Your arsenal is expanded with a number of bigger and better new units, all finely balanced of course, and new combat options like Tag Battle open the scope of Advance Wars to levels previously unseen in the series.

The addictive combat is supplemented by gameplay that remains just as engaging during a quick five minute skirmish between classes as it is during marathon campaign missions or manic six player Wi-Fi clashes. Advance Wars is a truly phenomenal example of portable gaming.

Arguably the first title to fully utilize the DS's dual screen screens effectively, Dual Strike is a must for any DS owner.



One of the Game Boy's most exciting and addictive new properties makes it's way over to the twin screens of the DS and the result is exceptional. Advance Wars: Dual Strike takes the deep, intense strategy of previous iterations and hones it to near-perfection with the help of the unique functions the DS brings to the party. The fundamentals are picked up quickly and controlling the battle field has never been more fluid with the stylus and dual screens at your disposal. However Advance Wars veterans know the apparent simplicity of the game is all facade; beneath the clean cartoon

SHATTERED UNION

PLATFORM: XBOX, PC
 GENRE: TURN BASED STRATEGY
 PUBLISHER: TAKE 2 INTERACTIVE
 DEVELOPER: POPTOP
 RATING: 12+
 PLAYERS: 1-2 PLAYERS
 WEBSITE: N/A
 RECOMMENDED RETAIL PRICE: \$69.95
 RELEASE DATE: OCTOBER 21



The back story behind Shattered Union sounds oddly familiar. A hugely unpopular American President sits in the White House, having used dishonest means to get himself elected to power.

Where Shattered Union separates itself from the present day Bush administration (we hope) is that somebody takes the extreme step of detonating a nuke in the middle of Washington D.C. With its leadership in turmoil, numerous states begin to 'withdraw' from the union to form small, independent

countries such as the Republic of Texas and the Californian Commonwealth. Add to this the nasty European Union (EU) that steps in with the objective of reuniting the torn nation.

Shattered Union is a turn based strategy game. Playing as one of the six factions you can each turn attack, and be attacked by the other factions. In between turns you can elect to buy new units and repair damaged ones. When two sides clash you zoom down to a battlefield complete with the likes of cities, hills and rivers. What follows is a gameplay experience remarkable similar to Nintendo's Advance Wars games, or if you happen to be grey enough in the hair the old PC Battle Isle titles.

Complete with infantry, tanks, aircraft the game has a decent level of depth strategy wise. We did feel that the game lacked character, however this can be forgiven in part being as this is the only game of this type we can think of to have ever been released on the Xbox console (it's also available on PC). There's also online multiplayer support to enjoy.





BURNOUT REVENGE

PS2, XBOX / EA Games

The sequel to 2004's racing game of the year, Burnout Revenge reignites racing in the fastest most dangerous game on the road - the only rule is complete anarchy.



NHL 06

PS2, XBOX, PC / EA SPORTS

Express your shooting style and light the lamp with high-light reel moves such as spinoramas, toe drags, bat-ins, and between-the-legs shots.



FABLE: THE LOST CHAPTERS

psP / ea sports

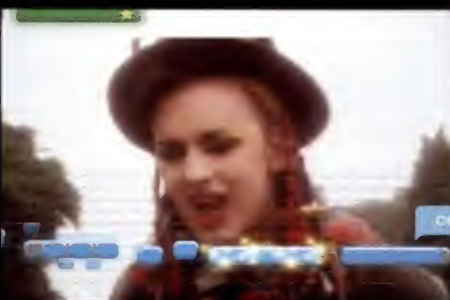
Based on the award-winning Xbox title, Lost Chapters is fully optimized for the PC complete with expanded content, greater customization and new quests.



VIETCONG 2

PC / Take 2 Interactive

Story-based shooter Vietcong 2 introduces several odd characters, including a military advisor, an angry Marine, an American news reporter, even a girl from a brothel.



SINGSTAR 80s

PLAYSTATION 2 / SCE

SingStar fans around the world, Brace yourself for the ultimate '80s invasion. Studio London has developed the definitive nostalgic music experience - SingStar '80s.



WWE SMACKDOWN! VS RAW 2006

PLAYSTATION 2, PSP / THQ

Enter the ring for the fight of your life against top WWE Superstars. SmackDown! vs. RAW 2006 delivers the deepest and most realistic wrestling experience ever.



DARKWATCH

Xbox / Ubisoft

They grind their enemies for fuel, fashion their skin into cloaks, and these are the good guys! Darkwatch, a vigilant strike-force that has declared war on evil incarnate.



WORLD RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP

PSP / SCEI

Experience the "in your face" thrills and spills of rally on the move - feel the speed, embrace the power, taste the mud with World Rally Championship on PSP.



FIFA MANAGER 06

PC / EA Sports

FIFA Manager 06 is the only management sim to boast fully-licensed teams and players from every major league around the world.



NINTENDOGS

Nintendo DS / Nintendo

There are more than 15 breeds in all and players can interact wirelessly with friends' dogs -- they can set their DS to bark whenever another puppy is within range.



CALL OF DUTY 2: THE BIG RED ONE

PS2, Xbox / Activision

An unparalleled portrayal of the chaos and intensity of WWII told using detailed graphics, advanced AI, realistic character animations and explosive on-screen action.



WIPEOUT PURE

PSP / SCEI

The latest in the seminal Wipeout series captures the essence of anti-gravity racing: Hi-tech weapons, high speed and a high-tempo dance soundtrack.



X-MEN LEGENDS PACK

Activision have given us a PS2 copy of X-Men Legends 2 plus a DVD of the original X-Men movie to give away so hurry up and get those entries in.

Which of the following is not a member of the X-Men?

- a) Cyclops
- b) Storm
- c) The Human Torch



FAR CRY/XBOX LIVE

Ubisoft & Microsoft have generously provided us with an Xbox copy of Far Cry Instincts as well as a free Xbox Live! kit to give away.

Which of the following Xbox games is not an Xbox Live title?

- a) Conker Live & Reloaded
- b) Jade Empire
- c) Halo 2



TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 06

For golf fans on the go, we have a copy of EA's new Tiger Woods title for the PSP to give away so hurry get in the draw!

Top PGA golfer Vijay Singh hails from which country?

- a) India
- b) Sri Lanka
- c) Fiji

CONGRATULATIONS

Thanks for all the entries last month: our congratulations go out to all the drawn winners from issue 46.

MP3 MEGASTICK 520

Julian Tilley, Gisborne
Corben Taylor, Epsom
Jaxon Greening, Hamilton
Ashleigh Doncaster, Papakura
Melissa Clark, Hobsonville
Ross Logan, Newmarket
Dylan Tadmán, Whangarei
Sho Ali, Botany
D. Chan, Lower Hutt
K. Keinner, Dunedin

EA SPORTS PACK

PS2 – Bart Fisher, Panmure
Xbox – Linden Barr, Christchurch

CHARLIE & THE CHOCOLATE FACTORY

Adrian Kelly, Wellington

HOW TO ENTER

Write the correct answer, your name and contact details on the back of the envelope (or in an e-mail). All correct entries immediately go into the draw to win. This month's winners will be drawn and notified November 15, 2005. Please refrain from flooding our email. No entries will be accepted after that date.

Send to: Gamefreaks Competition, PO Box 68-211, Newton, Auckland or e-mail us : competitions@tenthplanet.co.nz (Maximum of 3 entries per e-mail address, per competition)

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